

I have been a volunteer mentor with for over 10 years through the Torrington Area Youth Services Bureau. The children that this agency helps are the lost and forgotten ones, the ones who will be in trouble in the future if we don't take care of them now. It's a mistake to put off taking care of this kids until they're in trouble, if not in terms of the humanity of the situation, then surely the monetary cost. At this point in time, spending the money to keep programs like TAYSB running will save thousands in the future, in court fees, legal aid, counseling, incarceration, foster care, and more.

I first volunteered with TAYSB when I read a story about a young woman who had "aged out" of the foster program and was now on her own, at age 18. I don't know about you, but when I was 18 I was ill-prepared to take on the world on my own. I was lucky: I had family and community and friends to help guide me. These kids aren't so lucky. The first girl I mentored had had a horrific childhood, suffering abuse, both sexual and emotional, starting at age 8. Without programs like TAYSB and their Community Based Life Skills, Summer Youth Employment, Juvenile Review Board, and the One on One Mentoring and School Based support groups, kids like this girl fall through the cracks. They're shuffled around in foster care and fall behind in academic performance, social development, and the ability to be independent. If we don't realize that ignoring these problems will only come back to haunt us in the future, we're in for some nasty surprises.

The second girl I mentored for over 4 years, and the accomplishments this child has made are heart-warming. She's gone from a withdrawn, intimidated young girl who lashed out, to a strong young woman, who has done well in school and life and has made friends along the way. Her future plans include pursuing a college education.

Please join me in supporting the Torrington Area Youth Service Bureau's mission, by rejecting budget cuts to this great asset and possibly even increasing their budget, so they can continue to help as many of our families and youth in need.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Schroeder Perez  
Volunteer in the One on One Mentoring Program